/32 cont'd/

583 The two parties both make excuses to the other: one for its poverty and the hard times, "I could not offer more, but what is offered is given wholeheartedly"; the other for its indigence, "I was forced to ask for much too much, but now I am more than satisfied with the gifts...."

584 Then when all have taken their places again, the go-between rises and proposes to the family that they present the "flower," that is, the little bride.

They hasten to spread out a red rug or piece of red felt in the middle of the room, and the little bride, chaperoned by a young girl, appears before the assemblage. The two girls hold each other by the hand.

[302] The bride has risen early in the morning, has washed with all kinds of soap, and her hair has been dressed by the most skillful woman in the neighborhood. She has put on her handsomest finery, she has beautiful flowers in her hair, and she is made up in such a way as to be longer recognizable. Her companion, a little girl like herself, has a more modest toilette; she has no flowers in her hair, she wears a black veil on her head. They are certainly "the amazon and the little white goose"; no chance of making a mistake who is the bride.

[516 576] They advance toward the middle of the rug, facing the future father-in-law, let go their hands, bow respectfully, kneel, bow their foreheads to the ground three times, rise, and begin the same prostration over again three times. This is the ancient Chinese greeting on grand occasions. Everything is done gravely and sedately. They are well-trained T'ou-jen girls! Also their childhood games are [524] only the apprenticeship /33/ for the ceremonial. All girls play at ceremonies; they adore them. This is characteristic of the Orient.

583 584 One sees that the "flower" is aware of her own important and that of the moment; she tries to make a good impression on the assemblage, and the future father-in-law smiles, becomes young again, throws on the rug with a generous gesture two or three handfuls of red lozenges and a handful of cash, emblems of good fortune and wealth. The guests do the same. The girls pick up everything,